Resilient and sustainable health systems: The role of mental health

Inge Petersen, PhD
University of KwaZulu-Natal
South Africa

WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER FOR PROMOTING RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SYSTEMS?

HOW TO STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH?

Importance

- Infectious disease outbreaks increase risk for the development of mental disorders[1]
  - Witnessing and caring for severely ill
  - Death and bereavement
  - Perceived life threat
  - Food and resource insecurity
  - Discrimination of affected/infected
- Mental disorders can compromise prevention and treatment[2]
  - Compromise prevention and propel transmission through unsafe behaviour
  - Compromise help-seeking
  - Compromise treatment and propel disease progression through poor adherence and immune suppression
  - Compromise care provided due to increased health worker psychiatric morbidity

1. Shultz JM, Baingana F, Neria Y. The 2014 Ebola outbreak and mental health: current status and recommended response. JAMA. 2015 Feb 10;313(6):567-8. PubMed PMID: 25532102.
2. Prince M, Patel V, Saxena S, Maj M, Maselko J, Phillips MR, et al. No health without mental health. Lancet. 2007 Sep 8;370(9590):859-77. PubMed PMID: 17804063. Epub 2007/09/07. eng.

WHO projections of mental disorders in adults affected by emergencies[1]

	Before the emergency: 12-month prevalence[a]	After the emergency: 12-month prevalence[b]
Severe disorder (e.g. psychosis, severe depression, severely disabling form of anxiety disorder)	2–3%	3–4%[c]
Mild or moderate mental disorder (e.g. mild and moderate forms of depression and anxiety disorders, including mild and moderate PTSD)	10%	15–20%[d]
Normal distress (no disorder)	No estimate	Large percentage

- 76-85% of people with severe mental disorders in low-income countries do not receive treatment[2]

1.   World Health Organization (2013). Building back better. Sustainable mental health care after emergencies. Geneva: WHO
2.   Demyttenaere K, Bruffaerts R, Posada-Villa J, Gasquet I, Kovess V, Lepine JP, et al. Prevalence, severity, and unmet need for treatment of mental disorders in the World Health Organization World Mental Health Surveys. JAMA. 2004;291:2581–90.

STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH

Approach to recommendations

- Need to strengthen mental health care generally so as to be more resilient in times of crisis
- Health emergencies do present opportunities to strengthen mental health services through "building back better" approach[1]
- Adopt a platform approach
  - Health care, community, population platforms for interventions
  - Useful for identification of role played by different sectors and where resources are required
- Leverage leapfrogging opportunities
  - Innovations/technological advances
  - Evidence and experiences of high income and low- and middle-income countries
    - Forthcoming DCP 3 volume of mental health[2]
    - Lessons from EMERALD and PRIME research consortia

1. World Health Organization (2013). Building back better. Sustainable mental health care after emergencies. Geneva: WHO.
2. Patel V, Chisholm D, Dua T, Laxminarayan R, Medina-Mora (Eds). Disease Control Priorities, 3rd Edition Volume Disease Control Priorities for mental, neurological and substance use disorders. Washington, D.C.: World Bank; Forthcoming.

Interventions by platform

Delivery Platform • Delivery sub-platform	Interventions to strengthen mental health
Health care platform	
• Primary health care	
• Specialist care	
Community Platform	
• Schools	
• Neighbourhood/Community groups	
• Workplace	
Population Wide Platform	
• Policy, legislation and regulation	
• Information/awareness	

Delivery Platform • Delivery sub-platform	Interventions to strengthen mental health
Health care platform	

• **Primary health care**	**Decentralize and integrate mental health into general health care using a task sharing approach**
	• Provide mental health services in general hospitals
	• Train non-specialists in mental health care -pre-service training and in-service training
	    • Provide orientation to patient-centred care and clinical communication skills training
	    • Provide psychosocial support for the service providers
	    • Ensure sufficient psychosocial workers and specialists for referral pathways and supervision within a collaborative stepped care model
	• Ensure adequate supply of psychotropic medication at PHC facilities
	• Ensure sufficient indicators for mental health in the health information system

• **Specialist care**	• Diagnosis and management of acute and severe conditions within a stepped care model

Funk, M. et al. Mental health policy and plans: promoting an optimal mix of services in developing countries. *International Journal of Mental Health*, 2004, 33(2), 4-16.

Delivery Platform • Delivery sub-platform	Interventions to strengthen mental health
Health care platform	

• **Primary health care**	Decentralize and integrate mental health into general health care using a task sharing approach
	• Provide mental health services in general hospitals
	• Train non-specialists in mental health care – pre-service training and in-service training
	   • Provide orientation to patient-centred care and clinical communication skills training
	   • Provide psychosocial support for the service providers
	   • Ensure sufficient psychosocial workers and specialists to provide supervision and referral pathways within a collaborative stepped care model
	• Ensure adequate supply of psychotropic medication at PHC facilities
	• Ensure sufficient indicators for mental health in the health information system

• **Specialist care**	• Diagnosis and management of acute and severe conditions within a stepped care model
Community Platform	
• **Schools**	• Information and awareness • Identification and case detection in schools of children with mental disorders
• **Neighbourhood/ Community groups**	• Training of gatekeepers, including community health workers, police, and social workers in identification of people with mental disorders and provision of mental health first aid • Gender equity and/or economic empowerment programs for vulnerable groups
• **Workplace**	• Integrate mental health awareness and promotion strategies such as stress reduction into occupational health and safety policies

Delivery Platform • Delivery sub-platform	Interventions to strengthen mental health
Health care platform	

• Primary health care	Decentralize and integrate mental health into general health care using a task sharing approach
	• Provide mental health services in general hospitals
	• Train non-specialists in mental health care
	    • Provide orientation to patient-centred care and clinical communication skills training
	    • Provide psychosocial support for the service providers
	    • Ensure sufficient psychosocial workers and specialists to provide referral pathways and supervision
	• Ensure adequate supply of psychotropic medication at PHC facilities
	• Ensure sufficient indicators for mental health in the health information system

• Specialist care	• Diagnosis and management of acute and severe conditions within a stepped care model
Community Platform	
• Schools	• Information and awareness • Identification and case detection in schools of children with mental disorders
• Neighbourhood/Community groups	• Training of gatekeepers • Gender equity and/or economic empowerment programs for vulnerable groups
• Workplace	• Integrate mental health awareness and promotion strategies such as stress reduction into occupational health and safety policies
Population Wide Platform	
• **Policy, legislation and regulation**	• Mental health policy and laws that are in line with the best practice and human rights standards • Laws and regulations to reduce availability and demand for alcohol use (for e.g. increases in excise taxes on alcohol products) • Laws to restrict access to means of self-harm/suicide

Thank you